

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 04113 101539Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-02 L-03 H-01 NEAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEOBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 4113

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM PINT TS

SUBJECT: GOT BLOCKS CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC LIBERTIES

REF: TUNIS 3062, TUNIS 3873, TUNIS 3912

1. SUMMARY: GOT BLOCKED THE CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC LIBERTIES SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN TUNIS JUNE 10. LPOLICE OFFICERS AT AFRICA HOTEL DENIED ENTRANCE TO PROPOSED CONFERENCE SITE TO ABOUT 40 PARTICIPANTS INCLUDING FORMER GOT MINISTER OF DEFENSE HASSIB BEN AMMAR AND FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK. TUNIS-BASED AND EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENTS AND FOUR REPRESENTATIVES OF TUNIS DIPLOMATIC CORPS OBSERVED THIS WHOLLY PEACEFUL EVENT. RAMSEY CLARK MET LATER IN MORNING WITH AMBASSADOR AND REQUESTED HIS ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA. AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED CLARK MEET WITH HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR., AND OFFERED TO RECOMMEND THAT BOURGUIBA, JR., RECEIVE HIM. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONFERENCE ON PBULIC LIBERTIES, SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN TUNIS AT THE AFRICA HOTEL JUNE 10 AND SPONSORED BY A
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TUNIS 04113 101539Z

GROUP OF PROMINENT TUNIS PROFESSIONALS, WAS BLOCKED BY THE GOT. DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING HELD ON JUNE 6 TO DISCUSS CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE WITH LIBYA REPORTEDLY DECIDED AS WELL NOT TO ALLOW CONFERENCE TO TAKE PLACE. CONFERENCE SPONSORS WERE NOTIFIED ORALLY BY INTERIOR MINISTRY OFFICIALS JUNE 8 THAT THEY COULD NOT HOLD CONFERENCE. ABOUT 40 PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS GATHERED

AT THE HOTEL AFRICA AT 9:00 A.M. JUNE 10 BUT WERE MET MY ABOUT FIVE UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS WHO DENIED THEM ENTRY. HASSIB BEN AMMAR, FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER AND PROMINENT LIBERAL/SOCIAL DEMOCRAT LEADER; BEJI CAID ESSEBSI, FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER; AND RAMSEY CLARK, FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL, WERE AMONG THE PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS. THEY REMAINED AT THE HTSLTZRER ABOUT 30 MINUTES AND THEN DEPARTED P

SFULLY. OTHER THAN BRIEF CHANTING OF "LIBERTY, DEMOCRACY" BY GROUP OF CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS, EVENT AT AFRICA WAS QUIET. SMALL CROWD OF ON-LOOKERS GATHERED BUT WAS EASILY AND PEACEFULLY DISPERSED BY POLICE. TUNIS-BASED AND EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENTS AND FOUR MEMBERS OF TUNIS DIPLOMATIC CORPS (U.S., U.K., CANADA AND SWEDEN) WITNESSED THE EVENT.

3. GOT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INFORMATION MUSTAPHA MASMOUDI TOLD PRESS AT HIS REGULAR FRIDAY NOON BRIEFING THAT THE CONFERENCE HAD NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED BY THE CONCERNED GOT AGENCY, THAT THE SPONSORING GROUP WAS NOT LEGALLY RECOGNIZED BY GOT AND THAT "ILLEGAL MEETINGS BY ILLEGAL GROUPS WILL NOT BE TOLERATED."

4. ON JUNE 9, CONFERENCE SPONSORS SOUGHT TO HOLD RECEPTION AT AMILCAR HOTEL IN SUBURBAN CARTHAGE, BUT POLICE PREVENTED THIS MEETING AS WELL. TRAFFIC WAS BLOCKED ON HEAVILY TRAVELLED ROADS WITHIN ONE-HALF MILE OF AMILCAR TO SEAL OFF VICINITY OF HOTEL. HASSIB BEN AMMAR, WHO WAS ALOS ON HAND FOR THISEVENT, THEN WENT TO TUNIS-CARTHAGE AIRPORT

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TUNIS 04113 101539Z

WITH LARGE FOLLOWING TO RECEIVE RAMSEY CLARK.

5. SHORTLY AFTER EVENT AT AFRICA HOTEL ENDED, RAMSEY CLARK CALLED THE AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS GOT GLOCKAGE OF CONFERENCE. CLARK WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE, PROFESSOR FAULK FROM PRINCETON UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSOR SCHAAR OF N.Y.U. CLARK EXPRESSED HIS DISAPPOINTMENT THAT GOT HAD NOT ALLOWED HOLDING OF CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY NON-VIOLENT AND RESPONSIBLE ELEMENTS OF TUNISIAN SOCIETY. HE SAID HE WANTED TO BE RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT BOURBUIBA TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE WITH HIM AND URGE A MORE TOLERANT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CONFERENCE SPONSORS. HE REQUESTED AMBASSADOR'S ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT. AMBASSAODR NOTED THAT BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH HAS SEVERELY RESTRICTED HIS SCHEDULE AND THAT GOT OFFICIALS ARE CURRENTLY PREOCCUPIED WITH NEGOTIATIONS WITH LIBYA OVER CONTINENTAL SHELF. WHEN CLARK SAID THAT HE MAY HAVE MET BOURGUIBA, JR., IN WASHINGTON, AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT CLARK CALL ON HIM TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE APPOINTMENT WITH

PRESIDENT. AMBASSADOR OFFERED TO RECOMMEND TO BOURGUIBA, JR., THAT HE RECEIVE CLARK. MR. SCHAAR ASKED AMBASSADOR IF USG WOULD TAKE A POSITION ON BLOCKAGE OF PUBLIC LIBERTIES CONFERENCE IN LIGHT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT WHOLE ISSUE OF PROPER USG RESPONSE TO POSSIBLE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IS UNDER STUDY IN STATE DEPARTMENT AND HE COULD NOT SPECULATE ON WHAT OUR REACTION MIGHT BE. CLARK AND HIS ASSOCIATES THEN RAISED ISSUE OF TRIAL OF BEN SALAHISTS THAT WILL COMMENCE JUNE 13 AND EXPRESSED OPINION THAT ALLEGED CRIMES OF THOSE UNDER INDICTMENT WERE POLITICAL OFFENSES AND THAT GOT CASE AGAINST THEM FOR HAVING THREATENED SECURITY OF THE STATE WAS WEAK. CLARK, WHO WILL DEPART TUNIS JUNE 12 FOR LONDON, SAID THAT THE FRENCH CHAPTER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WILL SEND AN OBSERVER FOR THE BEN SALAHISTS' TRIAL.

5. SHORTLY AFTERWARDS AMBASSADOR TELEPHONED BOURGUIBA, JR., WHO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 TUNIS 04113 101539Z

SAID HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO RECEIVE CLARK.

6. WE WILL FOLLOW THIS ISSUE CLOSELY AND REPORT SIGNIFICANT
REACTION TO DEPARTMENT.

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